

GUIDE TO PERSONAL ENTREPRISE AND INNOVATION

LEARN WHEN YOU ARE YOUNG, ACT WHEN YOU ARE OLDER

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Introduction

Piet Jansen, market gardener in Brazil, returns to the Netherlands to recuperate after a serious traffic accident there. During his gradual recovery he receives state unemployment benefit. At the invitation of his local social services in Zeeland, he participates in a Back-to-work programme with the title "People, People People" (as opposed to "Work, Work, Work" the motto of the cabinet of the "Purple" co-alition Government. In this programme he forms his personal ambition to get back to work at a new job, taking the limitations of his physical condition into consideration. The consultant supports him in his ambition by offering him a retraining programme. Piet seizes the opportunity with both hands. He sees this as a realistic chance to give his life some meaning again.

Bill Gates comes into contact with computers as a schoolboy at the Lakeside Private School in Seattle. He understands the opportunities that new information and communication technologies can offer. After secondary school, he goes to Harvard. In his student days, he works with Paul Allen on a computer operating system called 8080 BASIC, which makes it possible to control a PC. He uses his programming talent to create an operating system and offers a licence to IBM. Big Blue is demanding but Bill conducts the negotiations well and secures the deal. His direct competition was Digital Research, a company whom IBM preferred, but who did not want to comply with the strict non-disclosure conditions imposed by IBM. And so Microsoft unexpectedly became their first choice.

Although very young, Bill, together with his classmate, had the ambition to put a PC with Microsoft software on every desk in every household, at a time when such a development seemed completely improbable. In 1975, he set up Microsoft. The rest is history. He never completed his degree course.

Gerard van Ochteren teaches accountancy at a university. During a workshop on personal enterprise for scientists, he forms the ambition to set up a venture capital organisation in Burkina Faso in Africa on his retirement. In this way he hopes to help entrepreneurs to make a start. The leader of the workshop asks him if he has already researched this opportunity. No, not yet says Gerard. He has only dreamed of doing it. After some discussion, the leader of the workshop makes a suggestion. Would it be possible to get a post as a guest lecturer in Burkina Faso? Gerard can then do some research into how realistic this

ambition is – long before he has to retire. Gerard is enthused by this idea. He resolves to put this suggestion into practice.

What Piet, Bill and Gerard all have in common is that they all have an ambition and the desire to do something concrete with it. They are, each in his own way, entrepreneurs, in the sense that they form businesses which suit them and in which they are willing to invest their energies. Through the investment of their various talents, they actively seek out possibilities to create wealth, for themselves and for others. Obviously this produces problems which they have to overcome. But all three regard problems as challenges, and there we see the essence of personal enterprise, the central theme of this book *a Guide to personal enterprise and innovation*. Anyone can use their personal enterprise, that is the main message that is developed in these pages. Personal enterprise is achievable and fulfilling for everyone. With the right outlook, everyone can give his or her life – and those of others – a turn for the better. The Guide to Personal Enterprise and Innovation will promote personal entrepreneurship and lobby for more and more people to become involved.

Enterprise can be defined on a variety of different levels: The individual (the entrepreneur); the organisation (the entrepreneurial organisation) and the society (the entrepreneurial society). In this guide to personal enterprise and innovation, the accent is placed on the individual, on personal enterprise, but here and there we examine aspects of organisational and societal enterprise.

In short, the Guide to Personal Enterprise and Innovation is intended for anyone who wants to make more of his/her life.

The three steps to personal enterprise

The air is thick with excitement at a new development, which some have seen coming for years or maybe even tens of years: people ridding themselves of the burden of being directed by companies and authorities. The citizen is content to be treated as part of a machine by the Capitalist regime. He is content to have small improvements made to his life by the government. But more and more people are discovering that entrepreneurship is not only the preserve of a *happy few* but for everyone. The Guide to Personal Enterprise and Innovation will help to make clear how anyone, you or I for example, can learn to recognise their entrepreneurial talents and adapt them in a practical way – irrespective of personal circumstances – to the end of giving their lives the required meaning. Entrepreneurship is liberation and a vehicle for self-direction, communication, creativity and wealth creation. You can learn personal enterprise and adapt it. Personal enterprise lies within everyone's reach: the employee and the self-employed, at work and in free time. As explained, this realisation is getting through to more and more people. Personal enterprise is a way of living and working for anyone who wants to explore it.

Dealing with risks

Many people immediately associate the word *enterprise* with the risks involved, and tend unwittingly towards a negative interpretation of the word risk, as in *risky*, something to be avoided and certainly not sought out. (Interestingly enough, the Chinese symbol for risk consists of two characters, one for *crisis*, and one for *opportunity*). However our whole lives consist of one risk after another, which we have to deal with consciously. Learning to deal with risk – at home, on the street, in traffic, at work, when travelling – is part of our lives. The important question is particularly: to what extent do you begin something unprepared? Someone who gets behind the wheel without a driving licence or having had a few drinks, is running unacceptable risks both with regard to himself and those around him. And entrepreneurship is no different.

With each activity that we undertake, we take on clear and well-defined risks. How we deal with these risks determines whether we live, study and work successfully and healthily. Through practice and experience, we learn to recognise, manage and control risks, including those associated with personal enterprise.

Good personal enterprise involves spotting opportunities and making use of them, while at the same time estimating what possible uncertainties and risks are associated with these opportunities. We take our chance when our personal talents are sufficiently developed and can manage the risks.

We take the right measures at the right time to cover risks that have been foreseen. In certain work situations, for example, we wear safety shoes and clothing. During a long car journey, we take a couple of hours rest at the side of the road. Perhaps we insure ourselves against being unfit for work (depending on the circumstances).

A crucial precautionary measure (but one which we don't often think of) is: practise regularly. A musician practises for hours every day on her instrument in order to develop her talent. Through this practice, she is ready when needed – so that she can also be asked back to give a further concert. Of course, practice requires perseverance. But if we can achieve something that we want, the taste of success is incomparably sweet.

In short, there is no life without risk. But if we develop our personal talents, when we strive to fulfill our ambitions, then we can deal sensibly with the risks which we encounter.

Misunderstandings about enterprise

Entrepreneurship in the sense of what an entrepreneur exactly is and does, leads to many misunderstandings. In this way hidden qualities often get attributed to entrepreneurs, as Amar Bhidé notes in his seminal work, *The Origin and Evolution of New Businesses*. An entrepreneur should be someone who has a unique and brilliant idea, uses some unique new technology, writes an extensive business plan and has access to considerable starting capital. Furthermore, an entrepreneur should be young, with a good education. Also an entrepreneur should be someone who takes big risks, invests heavily upfront and wants to make a quick profit. Practicality teaches us otherwise:

- A great majority of entrepreneurs begin with an existing idea and most use a combination of existing technologies.
- At the beginning, planning is not the main thing, but flexibility and adaptability are.
- Only 5% start with a fortune or with financial support. Starters are mostly self-financing with an average amount not in excess of 25,000 euro
- Most starters are over thirty and have at their disposal practical experience in a particular field.
- In the Netherlands the average age for a starter is 35.
- Although entrepreneurs are capable of dealing well with uncertainty and ambiguity, they like to avoid risk and focus on customers, turnover and results.
- Besides financial success, entrepreneurs strive for freedom and pleasure. They share their success with colleagues and partners, and they enjoy their independence. In this respect, solving small and large problems plays an important role. Entrepreneurs see problems as challenges, which allow them to give full rein to their talents.

Since the misconceptions about entrepreneurship are indeed so widespread, it is hardly surprising that the antipathy towards entrepreneurship is so high. Only 7% of Dutch students are considering becoming a self-employed entrepreneur. The rest prefer a career at a multinational. After some years work

experience, however, the percentage that want to become self-employed entrepreneurs, grows considerably.

The greatest misconception is however, that enterprise should be reserved for entrepreneurs, who develop activities for their own profit and at their own risk. The Guide to Personal Enterprise and Innovation demonstrates that enterprise in the 21st century is within everyone's reach.

Learn when you are young, act when you are older

Every parent knows that, when a child learns to crawl and to walk, he finds out about the world around him in a natural way. He sees no danger and by falling down and getting up again (with the protection of his parents) learns to make the most of his possibilities. The child learns from his behaviour and therefore also from his mistakes.

Personal enterprise is apparently in his nature. A little later the child is full of questions: what is that? Why? By nature we are curious, we want to know how things are.

It is also no surprise that children of enterprising parents often follow the example of their parents in their independent approach to life. For example, everyone knows a student with a part-time job. The question which we can ask ourselves is whether the upbringing by parents in combination with the Dutch educational system encourages the natural tendency towards personal enterprise or actually discourages it. The chance is great that children's natural creativity gets restricted at school. We could ask the same question of employers. Do they offer young talent sufficient opportunity for self-development? In other words, how do we promote personal enterprise?

Figure 1.1 shows the different phases of life, with ages underneath. The line in this figure shows entrepreneurial capacity. What is interesting now is that, as already mentioned, entrepreneurial capacity remains not limited to independent entrepreneurship in the traditional and narrow meaning of the word, namely to the relatively small group of people older than 35, who have their own commercial concern. No, entrepreneurial capacity is spread out over all ages: schoolchild, student, adult and old age. This means that parents, educators and employers can take advantage of the need for personal enterprise, by giving space for the individual talents of people of all ages, to flourish.

The term *intrapreneurship* (enterprise within an organisation) is being used to point to an understanding of the need for personal enterprise within organisations. More and more employees are combining *intrapreneurship* with *entrepreneurship*. With the retention of a permanent employment contract of, for example, three or four days, people are starting part-time businesses at their own risk and for their own profit. It goes without saying that it is sensible to first acquire some experience with employers, in order to develop talent and to acquire a particular area of expertise. By acting as an intrapreneur and recording some successes, a person can get some practice at personal enterprise and prepare himself for a possible step into personal entrepreneurship. Naturally, this specific step does not lie in store for everyone. Not everyone goes on to start up a business at their own risk and for their own profit (and even if they do, they do not necessarily take on staff). Personal enterprise is however for anyone of any age.

Personal enterprise in children

Joel Rubin was fifteen years old when he saw on television in the winter of 1989/90, how tuna fishermen were slaughtering dolphins on a large scale, and he decided to take action (not realising that in a number of places in the United States, even children were coming up against guns). This led eventually to a campaign in which protest cards were sent to the private addresses of directors in the fishing industry. As a result, these fell out with their own children, and drew the fishermen into the dispute. They achieved a victory as early as April 1990. The three biggest suppliers of canned tuna – Heinz (Star-Kist), Bumble Bee and Van Camp (together responsible for seventy percent of the total amount of canned tuna in the United

States) – announced that they would only purchase from tuna fishermen, who left the dolphins alone. Further there would be a quality control mark on the cans to keep the consumer informed. The example of Joel and many other children shows that enterprise can begin at a very early age and that we should not underestimate the abilities of children.

Source: Phillip Hoose, *It's our world too! : stories of young people who are making a difference*. Little, Brown and Company, Boston (Mass.) 1993.

From dependence to independence

The philosopher Arnold Cornelis illustrated the logical evolution towards independence and communication in his book *<The delayed time; revenge of the Soul as Philosopher of the Future>* with the story of creation as metaphor. The sixth dawn of Cornelis, in which we now find ourselves, talks about communication and independence as logical weapons in the struggle for a meaningful and fulfilling life. Here, Cornelis breaks with the conventional wisdom of the twentieth century, in which people are controlled like machines. Much of the philosophy of Cornelis can be found in the pages of this guide, as the underlying theory that inside every human lurks an entrepreneur. Cornelis posits the theorem that the time factor maintains a connection with the hidden agenda of every individual, who builds up a picture of himself in relation to his worldview and strives for happiness through independence and communication. The hidden agenda unfolds itself over time. Cornelis describes how anyone can feel encouraged through awoken energy and orientates himself by where he is in space: is he at home or in a hotel room? Consequently, he asks himself what his agenda is: what did he do yesterday, what is in his programme for today and what is important in the near future? This theory offers us countless points of contact in order to better understand ourselves and the world around us and to attune our dealings with it.

Definition of entrepreneurship

In the foregoing paragraphs we have used the terms *enterprise*, *personal enterprise*, *entrepreneurial capacity* and *entrepreneurship* freely. This begs the question of a clear definition. In the course of my reading on this subject in 1998, I came upon the following definition in the European Casebook on Entrepreneurship and New Ventures:

At the heart of entrepreneurship is the notion of action arising out of the pursuit of opportunity, as a result of which value is created. The entrepreneur starts with the opportunity and then seeks the resources to exploit it.

This definition is almost too satisfying to translate (into Dutch). Core elements are: action, tracking down opportunities, wealth creation, assembling resources (sources and means of help) and exploitation of the opportunity.

We shall use the expressions *entrepreneurship* and *enterprise* in this article as if they were synonyms. In this way we shall place the emphasis on personal enterprise: how to be entrepreneurial yourself. There are already many publications about how to write a business plan, from the point of view of the enterprise. Little, however, has been written about people as personal entrepreneurs. Leading on from the aforementioned definition, I prefer a shortened definition of personal enterprise: *see your opportunity, take your opportunity and create wealth*. This definition is repeated in the course of this article.

The road to personal enterprise

We will start with the real-life example of Jolanda van den Berg and will describe, using her story, the three steps on the road to personal enterprise.

In the winter of 1995/96, Jolanda went on holiday to South America and ended up in Cuzco, the ancient Inca capital in the Andes in Peru. She saw the street children there and resolved to something for them. (Step one: See your opportunity)

Six months later she returned to Cuzco, this time with the intention of staying for good to help the children. She sought contact with them and spent all her time with them until she had been able to win their trust. Then she suggested to one of them: "Wouldn't you like to move in to my place?" Soon afterwards, she had a couple staying with her and had to provide better facilities (than the rented room that she had at that time). A donor provided her with some money to buy a large building in Cuzco: the Niños Hotel (Children's Hotel) was born. (Step two: Take your opportunity)

Since then, Jolanda's initial one-woman-venture (her partner, Titus Bovenberg joined her soon after) has grown into three foster families (of twelve, eleven and six children), two Niños Hotels and two Niños children's restaurants where 250 children get a hot meal six days a week and other facilities (showers, medical attention, sports lessons and light-hearted lessons in social values and self-respect). The whole enterprise, which operates under the name of Stichting Niños Unidos Peruanos, has, up till now, offered permanent employment for about forty local staff who in their turn, support forty families. The building works that have been carried out over the years have created work for tens of people for many months. (Step three: create wealth)

So personal enterprise can be seen as a journey of discovery, a journey with independence and communication as its driving force.

See your opportunity: the first step

The journey begins with the individual (self-image) and his/her personality and talent in relation to the image of the world that he/she has built up (world-image) Inner motivation is the basis for carrying out one's own hidden agenda. Opportunities present themselves in the form of concepts and ideas about wealth creation, which are possibly relevant to the entrepreneur and the available customers. Just like Jolanda, who was touched by the lot of the street children in Cuzco and wanted to do something concrete for them. The personal entrepreneur takes counsel from his perception and feelings and those of others and tries to get an idea of whether a developed concept may represent real value – and if so, for whom? Is the idea or concept distinct enough? Does it solve a practical problem? Is there a real need for the suggested solution. Are other people offering an existing and maybe better solution? What can I learn from this? Is there potential for wealth creation? Is the time right for it? In short, does it make sense? The personal entrepreneur has now taken the first step on his journey. The second step can only be taken if motivation increases and the personal entrepreneur perceives concrete possibilities. You cannot just have ideas, the ideas must touch you at a personal level. If the ideas and possible concepts do not touch you at a personal level, then it is difficult, if not impossible, to do anything useful with them over a long period of time. You must really believe in your idea. Your heart must be in it. Heart, head and hands are only connected if the idea touches you personally. If that is not the case, then it is better to start looking for a new idea.

Take your opportunity: step two

The journey continues if the developed idea (concept) is a good one. We shall show later that an idea is a good idea, if the time is right for it (according to Victor Hugo). Now begins the search for the necessary

resources or raw materials. What do I need to transform my idea into reality? The available materials are: labour (giving preference to human understanding and talent), resources and raw materials, information and knowledge (including possible patents) and finally capital. That sounds a bit overawing. Consider, however, that for very many opportunities, existing manpower, existing resources and raw materials and existing capital, through clever exploitation of information and knowledge, can lead to significant wealth creation. Consider that taking advantage of opportunities is a skill that can be learned through practice. As I said: learn when you are young, act when you are older. When, through force of circumstances, you have to change course in an organisation, you have at your disposal the innovative potential of the whole organisation, and you can also exploit this potential. You acquire the understanding and the feeling to consider what such a change of course will cost, and what potential benefits it will bring. When considering costs and benefits, we should not only think in terms of money and profit, even though these are, of course, necessary raw materials and conditions for continuity. For the social costs and benefits (Does it feel good? Does the customer benefit? Does society benefit?) and costs and benefits in the sense of durability (environmental friendliness, recycling, harming nature and the landscape) also play an important role.

Apply this analysis well in the second stage of the journey, then we can prepare ourselves to try out the implementation plan and test it on a small scale. Many organisations forget, during this phase of design and development, to involve (potential) customers and employees. Small wonder, then, that many improvements and new ideas don't work, cannot be implemented successfully and for that reason, never acquire the status of successful innovation. Many good ideas go to waste. Successful organisations focus on what Frido Smulders of the Technische University, Delft, calls *continuous innovation*, by means of an open dialogue with customers and employees. This is a splendid perspective from which a concern can grow organically with the needs of their customers in the market, as naturally as breathing in and out. A way of standing at the centre of the community, with all senses alert, ready to spot an opportunity and exploit it immediately. Would this not be a wonderful alternative to the rigorous restructuring plans involving mass redundancies, of large to very large organisations, with all the fear, loathing and bitterness that such operations inevitably bring with them? Why is executive management not smart enough to give priority to *continuous innovation*? Perhaps self-sufficiency in good times blinds them to the opportunities which are all around them. We are insufficiently prepared for bad times, which befall us, and we have to make deep cuts in the organisation in order to survive a little longer. We lack flexibility, pro-active thought and the potential to adapt – the architypal trademarks, to put it briefly, of entrepreneurial potential.

Wealth creation: step three

The proof of the pudding is in the eating! The most exciting part of the journey is now approaching: the improvement or new idea has to be put into practice. Does it work? Does it do what we thought it would? Better or worse? What do our customers and our employees think? Does it create a buzz? Do we have to adapt or augment it? Does it produce economic value (money) social value (fun, happiness, cleanliness, comfort) and does it seem to have durability (does it improve our planet in some small way)? If the answer to these questions is yes, then the reward is great: self-fulfillment for all involved, for less we don't do it. Just like Jolanda, who, together with her husband, succeeded not only in helping children but also in creating jobs for local families. She finds in her work personal fulfillment and through this, helps others to fulfill themselves.

Of course success is not always guaranteed. It is just like learning to skate: a process of falling over and getting up again – and especially a process of perseverance and determination until success is achieved. There are, after all, circumstances which we cannot always foresee. Our talents may not be sufficiently developed. It goes without saying that it is most important to learn from this journey and to carry our knowledge and experience from it through to the next adventure. I can confirm from personal experience

that this is not always that simple. Sometimes things just go against you. And when things really go against you, they often coincide with other slices of misfortune. The English have a lovely expression for this: *it never rains but it pours*. For example if you fall while skating and hurt yourself badly, your first and instinctive response is to walk away from the ice and never go skating again. By taking good care of ourselves and practising again, we nevertheless learn to skate through perseverance, and even come to enjoy it in the course of time. When we look back at the start when we were falling down and getting up again, it is often difficult to call to mind how difficult it was in the beginning. It is salutary to realise that everything is difficult at the start, and that that applies to everyone. You also discover that you are not cut out for absolutely everything. After your proverbial skating accident, you can also decide to give up skating and seek satisfaction in another sport or passtime, which you like better and which better suits your talents. Learning what you (don't) want, and what you can (not) achieve makes up a part of your journey of personal enterprise.

So we learn step-by-step – assembling our talents and ambitions – to grow from starting entrepreneur, to intermediate entrepreneur, to master-entrepreneur and finally to trainer and coach, so that we can help others to develop their entrepreneurial potential. Things that we cannot and do not want to do, we eliminate with increasing success, through focusing our energies on what we can and want to achieve. We proceed on our journey with more and more pleasure. If more and more people undertake the journey of personal enterprise, it could unleash an irreversible reaction in the 21st century. Personal enterprise would become the norm.

A fitting profession for everyone, no matter what their time of life

The number of possible professions is bewilderingly large. Finding a good match between personal talents and job possibilities is therefore certainly not simple. Using a simple formula, Van Lier brings some clarity into the jungle of job categorisation. She identifies three types:

- *Performance jobs*. Performance jobs are jobs done mainly manually. Examples can be found in the agricultural sector, the construction and installation sectors, in automation and in industry. It is noticeable that the performance itself has no influence on the design of the products or services. The performance is carried out in accordance with specifications developed by others.
- *Service jobs*. The trademark of service jobs is that they create conditions favourable for life, work and health. About three quarters of gross domestic product consists of service. Examples, to name but a few, are caring, nursing and trading in healthcare products, jobs in hotels, restaurants and cafeterias, recreation and tourism, jobs in security, administrative, financial, fiscal and accountancy services and, for example voluntary services. Legal services (lawyers, notaries, estate managers and so on) consultants and educational establishments also belong in the service sector. Often these jobs involve liaising between creative and performance workers.
- *Creative jobs*. Creative jobs allow the development and manufacture of something new. Examples include artists, writers, politicians, architects, clothing and furniture designers and scientists.

These categories make it possible to see the wood through the trees. They in fact help to make clear how a particular job can contribute to the furtherance of the entrepreneurial society – for enterprise is possible in each of the three categories (*see your opportunity, take your opportunity*):

In *performance jobs*, enterprise will come mainly to the fore in efficiency and effectiveness in the manufacture of products by hand and with machines. There are always opportunities to improve health and safety at work and to increase production, in which pleasure and pride in ones work play an important role. Craftsmanship and skill in performance jobs can also be extended into the 21st century.

In service jobs, there are opportunities literally to serve – not only to increase efficiency and effectiveness, but also, more to the point, to work in a more customer-friendly way in order to meet more and more, the

individual needs of individual customers. The transformation from supply-driven to response-driven work poses new demands and creates new opportunities at the same time. New and old media can be adapted to make customised service possible at the precise moment that the customer wants it.

In the development of new ideas and products, *creative jobs* play an important role. They offer maximum space for creative souls, who have the will and the ability to make use of every last nuance of entrepreneurship.

The extent to which the individual learns to control his or her talents in a given work-situation, which is suitable for him, follows a learning curve: the beginner reaches an intermediate level, those at this level progress to the level of expert and the expert develops himself to the point of trainer/coach. Cornelis says it all: work is learning. Through building up your talents, you give more structure to your own programme. You can decide for yourself whether you want to work with your hands or with your brain or with a combination of the two. You can also sense whether you have access to sufficiently creative talent to spend your life in a creative job. It is good to consider that many jobs involve a certain mix of performance, service and creative aspects. Peter Drucker put it like this several years ago: the big challenge for the 21st century is to increase drastically the (often far too low) productivity of the knowledge worker (in order among other things to be able to offer a solution to the problem of an aging society). Knowledge workers are creative, have an eye for service and do not shy away from the performance of certain tasks, if they bring them closer to their goal. The division, as described, of work into three categories according to Van Lier, offers just one possibility to examine for yourself where the emphasis for a particular sort of job lies – and so whether a performance, service or a creative job (or a combination of them) suits you best.

The limits of control have been reached

The limits of control have been reached. We are by nature prone to curb human behaviour and are becoming ever more adept at it. If, however, we want to achieve real progress, we must stop curbing human behaviour. We must break down the walls of this prison called policy. People are not machines and do not want to be used as such. People have the desire and the ability to better themselves. And they have a very good idea of how to do this. They are themselves a source of creativity for the benefit of themselves, their social network and society as a whole. Everyone's personal world-image determines where their theatre for personal enterprise shall be. There lie the opportunities and challenges, which we can see, interpret and, if possible make use of as a subject for personal enterprise, or again reject. We can ask ourselves the question, what touches us in the world around us and what would we like to get our teeth into. So we can make use of this Guide to Personal Enterprise and Innovation for ourselves in a very practical way. Now this period of time offers new possibilities and opportunities, as we have been able to see. The coming period holds the possibility that everyone can choose a job that really suits them.

Wealth Creation

Naturally everything revolves around wealth creation. Do you get better yourself from it? Does it make other people somehow better? We like to make a distinction between economic value (Do you make a living?) social value (Are relationships being strengthened?) and ecological value (Am I deviating from the policy of making respectful use of the Earth's resources?) The most effective and durable method of wealth creation comes about if you strive for a win/win situation in all of these. Emotional intelligence comes into its own here: can you through empathy (intuitively), work out the needs of others and take them sufficiently into consideration? The more successful you are at that, the greater your chances are, of making practical use of opportunities. If the relationship between the inner world (yourself) and the outer (other people) is not mutual, then this sort of partnership can often turn out to be short-term and

unsatisfactory. This is what it is all about: independence and mutual communication provide meaning for the future. To make this a bit more tangible, there follow several examples of enterprising people. Hopefully you will be able to see in them, aspects of the programme: independence, communication and wealth creation. Where possible I have underlined the traits of personal enterprise.

See your opportunity: an internal dialogue

We return again to the subject of self. You are going to see chances through an internal dialogue between your perception and your feelings, by having a conversation with yourself (communication) and by deciding for yourself what you want (independence) and by a sound analysis of your circumstances. Through this internal dialogue (listening to your inner voice), you can discover opportunities and work towards your personal goal.

It is important that this idea feels good, that it touches you and gives you energy. For passion and energy are trustworthy friends when it comes to seeing and taking opportunities. There are a number of reasons for this:

- It takes energy to instigate some new idea – for which you need passion and motivation.
- What you want to achieve and what you have the potential to achieve are in balance with each other. Of course there may be challenges on the road to your goal, which motivate you. But if you stick to your principles, you shall overcome them. If that is not the case, then maybe you have set your sights too high. Avoid stress and adapt your goals.
- You will also need passion and motivation to keep your project on a sound financial footing. You will have to be able to cope with set-backs. After all, have you ever done anything important in your life without having to overcome set-backs?
- You can often reach your goal with application and perseverance. Passion and motivation feed these qualities. In my long experience I have seen many good people with fantastic ideas, fail through lack of perseverance. Focus on what you want and you get what you focus on, says the trainer Ralph Bakker. I am in complete agreement. Or, as Prof. Thijs Chanowski says: Scatter and Gather. What he means is that a period of random ideas can be harnessed with focus. Otherwise, just like a stylus in a broken record-deck, you remain stuck in the same groove and go no further. And you don't want that, do you?

My advice is: practice with small steps. By going slowly, you actually speed things up. When, through much practice, you have mastered your trade, you can get things done ten or even a hundred times faster. Start at the beginning, with a clear goal before you, and concentrate on that (focus).

Portrait of personal enterprise and wealth creation – Floor Basten 20+

Self-employed researcher/publicist

Company: Orléon, Nijmegen

Wealth creation: publication of portraits of inspirational people, who make a unique contribution to society; helping organisations to change and renew themselves using as a basis, knowledge-intensive cooperation.

Opportunity seen: request for support by changing and renewing methods of cooperation based on knowledge: insight, overview and prospect.

Portrait of personal enterprise and wealth creation – Julien Haffmans 30+

Self-employed adviser in networking

Organisation: Netwerimpuls, Kortenhoef

Wealth creation: bringing together people and promoting and giving help to the idea that individuals are going to do *their own thing*.

In other words: Choosing what they are good at.

Opportunity seen: many people become stuck in organisations and are forced to remain *inside the line*..

By holding a mirror in front of these people, they discover their own power and choose self-development.

Portrait of personal enterprise and wealth creation – Arie Schinkel 80+

Retired, living in Amstelveen

Organisation: Arnhem Nijmegen High school

Wealth creation: after working all his life in the automation sector (among other things he developed the AMBI education modules), he developed, in close cooperation with the high school, a database for knowledge in work.

Opportunity seen: Knowledge consists not only of scientific knowledge, but also of knowledge of work.

There exists a need to describe and record work knowledge.

Portrait of personal enterprise and wealth creation – Sophia Smitskamp 60+

Committee chairperson

Organisation: Splinter, Middelburg, platform for fighting poverty in Zeeland

Wealth creation: assembling the forces of all the organisations, who are active in the fight against poverty in Zeeland. Support of participating organisations by means of conferences and training days. Lobbying politicians, provincial government and city councils. Participating in the steering committee *,people, people, people*, a project for the renewal of social services in Zeeland from the perspective of clients who find themselves in a situation of long-term poverty.

Opportunity seen: many initiatives lack cohesion and guidance. There is a need for the assembling of abilities and profiling to achieve social goals.

Portrait of personal enterprise and wealth creation – Richard Steenhuis 20+

Foreman, carpenter

Company: De Haan, Twello

Wealth creation: provision of service through a combination of working and learning; craftsmanship becoming more useful through specialisation in restoration of old buildings.

Opportunity seen: there is a need, especially at this time for craftsmanship and specialisation.

Portrait of personal enterprise and wealth creation – Jaap Tas 60+

Retired. One of the founders of the project *people, people, people*

Organisation: Jaap Tas Organisation Advice B.V. Vrouwenpolder i.s.m Rijnconsult, Utrecht

Wealth creation: In the period 2001 – 2004, setting up research among clients into poverty in the province of Zeeland. Designing and developing through conferences, a vision that everyone (including the poor) is the architect and builder of their own future. Developing a concept in *people, people, people* in the municipalities of Sluis, Reimerswaal and Vlissingen; and through training, guidance and supervision establishment of a new concept. More than 65% of participants in poverty take on a new approach to their lives, establish social contacts and make a contribution again to society – through a hobby, studying or voluntary work. Their lives become more meaningful. Several go on in the long term to return to paid employment. In March 2004 Jaap Tas contracted out these activities and since then nine of the thirteen district councils in Zeeland have participated in the project.

Opportunity seen: the former slogan of the purple coalition *work work work* did not lead automatically to a solution for people who were stuck in a situation of long-term poverty and often were far from finding a job in the labour market. It is not acceptable to simply write off this large group (approximately 340,000). The demand for creative and people-focused solutions to the problem of long-term poverty is growing.

Personal enterprise in different life situations

What sort of situation are you in now and what sort of situation would you like to be in in the near future? Where is the entrepreneur in you and how do you recognise it?

Still at school?

Are you at primary or secondary school? Or are you studying for MBO, HBO or a university degree? Then every day your time is taken up with formulating your own theories and learning to adapt them to practical life. Depending on your school and personal aptitude, this process causes you more or less trouble and gives you energy or saps it. Often energy and problems come in a wave-like motion and exertion and reward go hand-in-hand.

It is important, when it comes to choice of course or putting together a package of subjects to study, to be motivated by your own feelings and perception. Does your course inspire you? Does it suit you as a person? Are you aiming too high or too low? Does it involve an achievable challenge? Do you feel comfortable with your fellow students when you are at school? Do you feel comfortable with the teachers? Provided that you, as a student, think about these questions from time to time, you will see for yourself opportunities to make your school and study time as pleasurable as possible. You have the right to a great deal of care from your parents and teachers, so that you can develop yourself, acquire a nose for various possibilities and in doing so build up your self-image and world-image step by step. Make time for games and enjoyment. Discover freedom. Exchange hard work for rewards in your free time.

Many enterprising people have experimented with enterprise while still at school. They organised parties, were active in the student union, took the initiative to organise school trips and excursions, supported study projects actively with their positive attitude and determination. In their free time, they were, for example, captain of the football or hockey team, actor in amateur theatre productions, or member of a band.

The message is everywhere: discover your personal talents and use them where you can. In this way you can discover what you find useful and what you find are unrewarding ways to spend your time. You gain respect and a social network, which in most cases, is also there if things don't go so well for you and you need more support. Learning and discovery. Play and enjoyment. Creative expression. Pleasure and reward. Every student, you included, has the right to these things. The enterprising student is someone who, using his feelings and perception as a basis, gives his schooldays structure. In this way you learn to delegate and to communicate and increasingly to stand up for yourself and others. Part-time jobs, on a Saturday or in the school holidays, provide not only pocket money, but also a wealth of experience and contacts.

Your choice of study prepares you for your choice of profession. In the Netherlands, support in this area is very well arranged. You too can take advantage of it. Take this opportunity.

All these experiences form you and strengthen you. They prepare you for the next step, from enterprising student to enterprising employee.

Just started work?

Whether you are now 16,17 or 25, your entry into the labour market represents a serious challenge, in which you seriously need the talents acquired in your schooldays and your upbringing. You must first find an available job and then apply for it and then proceed to your first day at work and your training period. The most important criteria are: look for a job that suits you, one that fits your talents and one that you consider to involve meaningful work. Would you rather work with your hands or with modern machines, with computers or with agricultural products? Or would you like to work with people in, for example, a shop or a hotel, restaurant or cafeteria? Or are you a bookworm who is completely obsessed with the world of science and technology, a world where you can make a contribution and help to develop knowledge? Recognise your preferences. Talk to as many people as possible. Read up on businesses and organisations where you would like to work. Go to open days. Ask for an interview with someone in the HR department. Look at their website. See if someone in your area of knowledge works for that company and phone them up. Ask questions and find out if this employer represents an opportunity for you.

Your first choice is never your last choice. When you are just starting out with work, learning and discovery are the main themes – feeling and understanding if something suits you or not. It can be disappointing if something seems not to suit you. On the other hand, you can learn to discover what doesn't suit you. If after six months at the controls of a machine, you find that you miss human contact, then you have that knowledge. This can be the opportunity to reorientate yourself within or outside of the company and to track down opportunities to come more into contact with people. In this way, the enterprising employee develops himself step-by-step, with an occasional change of course, because his work doesn't seem to suit him. This development, as personal entrepreneur is self-driven. You communicate yourself with those directly involved.

It can also happen that, after six months in a company in the service industry, when you have learnt the tricks of the trade, that for you it becomes routine. The shine is taken off the job. You cannot bring your perception to bear. Maybe you are more suited to an intellectual or creative job, which is changeable and challenging. Universities are crying out for young, talented research staff. The same applies to large businesses like banks and insurance companies. They are looking for enterprising staff with knowledge, who can independently assemble, share and disseminate their knowledge.

The enterprising employee at the beginning of his career, seeks out a good balance between working closely with machines, with people and knowledge-related work. Look within yourself. Look at your talents and make a choice based on your feelings and your perception. This is how the enterprising employee works. Work is difficult, especially at the beginning. This principle always holds good. It is what normally happens. It goes without saying that you as beginner, will have to learn how you can best balance your work, your private life and time for yourself. And that will last your whole life. To arrange your working week so that the combination of work, private life and time for yourself results in optimal energy for you, is an art in itself. You have to learn that too. Listen to your inner voice and pay attention to your body. Relax at the right time. The lesson from Cornelis is: slower can mean faster. In any event, every six months you should take the time to reflect: where is the entrepreneur in me lurking? What opportunities can I see that I have left unexploited? What opportunities are there that I would like to convert into profit? What value results for me and those around me? Make changes to your programme on the basis of what you can and want to achieve. Set yourself practical goals, which constitute a challenge for you – and lo, the enterprising employee is born. Your diary will become full of activities that actually stimulate you – an ever-changing mix of private, business and personal. Your time horizon is normally from two to six weeks. The energy spiral works best for you when you can achieve your goal within this sort of period. By working all the time towards the accomplishment of your goals, you progress gradually from beginner to intermediate level. As personal entrepreneur, you build up your own future and you do not allow that to

depend (only) on others. You work closely with others, who you are able and want to help in order to achieve your goal as colleague in a job that suits you.

Experienced in a particular job?

After about three to five years, you become completely comfortable in your particular job. This applies equally to the personal and private projects that you have undertaken. Your personal qualities and talents are further developed through the experiences (good and bad), which you have had. The world around you has grown and you have more and more insight into it. It becomes easier to make choices and to guide yourself and to communicate. You can now sense whether you want to broaden your knowledge over more aspects of a particular job, or whether you would like to delve deeper into a particular area of specialisation. In the 21st century, there is a pressing need for "T-shaped" people, meaning people with wide experience (the cross-piece of the T) in one or more areas of specialisation (the downstroke of the T). Some choose this in order to be able to operate at the cutting edge of specialisation. Through developing their talents in this direction, they learn to make a significant contribution to solving problems and creating wealth. You can more easily widen your knowledge in a small business, through working on the multitude of different problems, which crop up. In larger concerns, that is more difficult. The department you work in is, more often than not specialised in a particular task in the process of adding value. However in larger companies, there is also the concept of career perspective and support departments, which have been set up there on a full-time basis. By taking the initiative yourself in planning your career (independence) and opening up a dialogue with the organisation (communication), you can attune your wishes and desires to those of the organisation. In practice, this is how such exciting careers come into being. You develop your talents over time in the course of performing all sorts of different tasks and duties, and the level of challenge grows. Companies which see the importance of Human Talent in general and of your talent in particular, are exceedingly suitable for developing entrepreneurial qualities.

In smaller companies, where you can also lose many of your talents, you come relatively quickly to a certain level of experience, unless the enterprise or organisation grows rapidly. Once that level is reached and your chances for self-improvement at the small company dry up, you can always seek out opportunities at other small companies, if that is your preference. At this level you have knowledge about your particular area and about the whole chain of sales and purchase; you are then free to decide at which companies or organisations you want to take the following step in your own programme.

In this way every step can contribute to your development and your market value. At this level, it is a challenge to seek out opportunities to create more wealth – for yourself, for your colleagues, the organisation and the shareholders. Taking these opportunities comes more easily as does demanding the space to create and implement improvements and renewals. To be active in this way means that that you have attained the level of experienced enterprising employee. You are working on self-realisation, while at the same time creating wealth for the organisation. It doesn't get much better than that.

Of course we all know that there are many obstructions and hinderences to be overcome. By controlling your emotions and using your feelings and your perception, you can overcome obstacles and break down barriers. You see problems as challenges. At this level you seek passionately and with perseverance at least three solutions to every problem. You acquire tolerance through clear communication. You get respect and authority and you contribute to the creation of wealth. Your time horizon is now about six to eighteen months. Core words at this level are *capability and exploitation*, while a beginner is better characterised by the words *learning, discovery and perception*.

And gradually expertise comes into the picture.

Master of a given profession?

The word *master* says it all: you control all the *ins and outs* of your profession. There are scarcely any secrets left for you to discover. You know almost subconsciously how to apply your talents quickly and flexibly in the right place and at the right time. You understand what effective behaviour is regardless of what the circumstances are.

Now it is interesting that you can call yourself a master. But that is not credible. However it is perfectly possible to feel like a master, and you can radiate this feeling in all sorts of ways. For example it is noticeable that you love your job; and others can perceive this. When that happens you are a master. The customer can regard you as a master due to the high level of quality and service that they experience, whenever they have dealings with you. Your colleagues can regard you as a master because you are open to cooperation (communication) and because you conduct your appointments in a timely manner and furthermore with the highest level of quality.

It is fantastic when you come to be regarded as a master by third parties. It is also wonderful when the most senior management discerns the qualities of a master in you and recognises it by offering you more and more interesting challenges. Because you approach dealings with a subconscious ability, you have time left over for reflection. You can oversee all the dealings of the organisation. You know how the arrangements of the organisation are connected to each other. You have time to think about new directions, which you and the organisation can implement in order to guarantee continuity. As a master your time horizon is about two to five years. You see opportunities to influence the strategy of the company and you learn to determine future strategies and to develop them. You see opportunities in the function processes of the organisation and you know what threats lie in wait. You are aware of your own talents and those of the organisation. You know what extra talents are required and you build for the future in the manner of a master. You give direction. You offer an example to others and you take the lead in the process of innovation.

It is also applicable to mastership that you can become master in a specific area of specialisation. For example as an accountant or communications specialist. Furthermore you can be master in a wider sense – manager, team leader, director or adviser. An enterprising master oversees this mix of possibilities and gives form to their implementation. He or she is often also a member of some professional organisation, in which active knowledge and experiences are exchanged.

In every profession, you can become a master. In a performance job, like technology, industry or the agricultural sector (where working with your hands can be elevated to an artform). In the service sector (banking, insurance, hotels, restaurants and cafeterias, tourism, recreation, education and so on). Or in creative professions (arts, the theatre, science and that kind of thing). As master you know where your heart is. You are the engine that drives wealth creation. You inspire beginners and experienced workers alike. They see you as a role model. Roughly speaking, you can estimate that it takes about ten years to become a master in some particular field. The buzz words for an enterprising master are: *inspiration and wealth creation*. Can you develop still further?

Trainer or coach in a particular job?

More and more frequently, you become involved in training and guiding new colleagues. You find it fascinating to share your knowledge and experience with others. You derive satisfaction from their progress. It is a very natural process, when you have a feeling for it, that you in turn create a trainer or a coach. You are held in high esteem for your qualities. The core expressions for a trainer or coach are: *support, sharing and helping to give substance to the independence and communication of others*. This requires inner peace and maturity. You must be strong in your intellectual and emotional qualities.

What is special about this phase in an enterprising person is that you can promote entrepreneurial qualities in other people. You challenge them to see and exploit opportunities. Everyone becomes stronger from this. In this way wealth creation gets a sort of lever effect. Some people have these qualities and abilities by nature, and can reach the position of trainer or coach at an early age. In most cases however, fifteen or so years can pass before these qualities become properly refined.

Independent entrepreneur?

In fact the description of the phases; beginner; experienced worker; master; trainer or coach; suggest that independence and communication are necessary to come to the point of self-realisation. In my view, that point is reached at independent entrepreneurship. In professional theory, this is, however, called internal entrepreneurship – the employee as entrepreneur. In the 21st century, we shall witness a true development in internal entrepreneurship in all sorts of organisations, even on the boards of non-profit making organisations. Becoming a self-employed entrepreneur with his own organisation, is the grand prize in the eyes of a growing number of people. The challenge to create wealth entirely through personal instincts induces people to cross the line and take a step away from the safe environment of service and into the more risky environment of loose associations with customers and suppliers. The interesting thing about self-employed entrepreneurs, who are successful, is that they really want freedom in the exploitation of their talents, and that is their passion. They see not so much the risk as the space for complete independence and communication. It comes as no surprise that the average age of starting self-employed entrepreneurs in the Netherlands is now about 38. The period from learner to experienced worker or master is spent in employment. People have a high measure of confidence in their talents. People have, after all about fourteen years experience of being an enterprising employee. The step to self-employed entrepreneur is therefore, not as risky as people would have us believe. If you consider the development of personal enterprise described in the foregoing, – from student to novice worker, to experienced worker, to master and trainer/coach – then it is plausible that self-employed entrepreneurship shall manifest itself much earlier and much more than is now the case, provided that the entrepreneur, who lurks in all of us, is challenged at a young age. A career as self-employed entrepreneur has a sort of infectious caché. As a consequence of this the number of self-employed entrepreneurs can develop positively at a younger age. In this way new developments in personal enterprise will unfold. This sounds now somewhat optimistic. Becoming a self-employed entrepreneur is not an option for everyone. And there is certainly no shame in that. We suggested earlier in the section on Seeing your Opportunity that we must remain realistic, in particular in our choice of ideas and opportunities which suit us, and from which we can derive satisfaction. If we fail to do that, then the perspective no longer seems as rosy as we described above. Before considering self-employed entrepreneurship, it is sensible to ponder at length whether you are cut out for it and indeed ready for it. If not there is no need to proceed. As previously described, you can make ample use of your entrepreneurial qualities in employment. There is absolutely nothing wrong with that.

Personal growth and work life balance

In all the foregoing, we have limited ourselves to the business world, to professional life. The same line of development applies to our personal and private lives and the mutual balance between these. Personal growth manifests itself properly in yourself and is not limited to a specific context. If this is the case, then there is the question of a lop-sided growth. You can get out of balance. If you take too little time for yourself, you neglect your private life or, then again, you neglect your work, and then you reach a point of crisis. Your body tells you that you can go no further. If you don't work, you feel listless and tired. Or, if

you work too much, you neglect your close personal relationships and your friends. You don't eat properly, don't get enough sleep and don't take enough exercise. In short you get bogged down. For example with experienced workers, you often see people ending up in a sort of crisis or burnout, if they do not achieve a good balance between work and private life. You can learn from such a small or large crisis. You give form to your own programme for life, the choice is yours. Admittedly, if you get stuck in a rut, you need temporary help. In a caring society that goes without saying. And if you come through your crisis, consider then that others may need your support, if they get depressed or stuck in a rut. True entrepreneurship shows itself through seeing these opportunities and acting on them. It makes life worthwhile.

The third phase of life and personal enterprise

Often it is forgotten that it is sensible to keep on being enterprising even in retirement. Often work falls away very suddenly and with it meaningful work partnerships. Some people then fall into a deep hole and literally go and sit beside their geraniums. That is very unfortunate and can perhaps even be called a personal catastrophe: if you don't use your talents, then they fly away within a very short time. The mistake that many people make is that when they are in the full flush of youth, they don't want to acknowledge that they are getting older. Therefore many of us plan too little for later on, for the time when our physical and mental powers deteriorate, the time when the end draws near. Admittedly, when we are no longer in a position to look after ourselves, then we have the right to care. The third phase of life however, concerns in many cases a period of about fifteen to twenty years after reaching the age of 65, years of which the majority can be enjoyed actively and healthily. So there is the serious question of the third phase of life, which can be exploited as a personal entrepreneur. The great advantage of retirement is that we can make use of our control of our own time (for us retirement means a diary full of work-related events). The retired person has furthermore, a life of experience in business and can fill the programme for his or her third phase of life meaningfully. In this way personal talents remain sharpened for as long as possible, and we profit from them fundamentally. We now have time for things (unfulfilled desires), which we could not get round to before. We have time to play and to enjoy ourselves. We can also utilise our talents on behalf of others. For young people (children, grandchildren) as well as older ones (visits to family or old people's associations). If you are at the beginning of your sixties, you do not want to think that you will soon be in need of care yourself. You can put off that time for as long as possible by staying focused on good health, by sufficient exercise (walking, tennis, golf, cycling, swimming) and with a good diet. The choice is yours. By following an active programme, you can stay young. In the television programme *Nieuwslicht* of 5th June 2004, one of the subjects covered was that you can even counter memory loss – and even get it back again – by doing specific sorts of physical exercise in tandem with a healthy diet.

You can also make this choice in order to cater for your distant future in a timely way. Do you want to keep living independently at home for as long as possible? What opportunities can you see then and what opportunities would you like to take? Or would you prefer a living situation in which a combination is possible of self-sufficiency and appropriate care? What if you can no longer live independently. What options will best suit you? Which ones fit your financial circumstances? How can you prevent yourself from becoming an unnecessary burden on your children? How can you make your circumstances nice enough for your children, grandchildren, friends and acquaintances to want to come and visit you? More and more people are taking the bull by the horns and are living the third phase of their lives independently. They are themselves conscious of the fact that they can do much with their talents even in this phase of their lives. And that they themselves can determine what they want and how they want it and how they can communicate about it with other concerned parties. It is certainly meaningful to work at a ripe old age and to be able, at the given time, to die secure in the knowledge that we have neglected no opportunity to

give our lives meaning. By giving and taking, we keep our talents honed. Your personal potential and your entrepreneurial capacity, combined with the wisdom which is a consequence of years of experience, make it possible to live a long and happy life.

Question: how do you arouse the entrepreneur within you?

In conclusion, there now follows a checklist which you can follow, in order to awaken the entrepreneur, who lurks in all of us, and to develop – from beginner to trainer and coach.

Checklist for personal enterprise

Build your intelligence up in small steps:

- Vocabulary
- Command of language
- Calculation
- Spatial awareness
- Perception
- Memory
- Abstract reasoning.

Build up emotional values in many small steps:

- Learn to recognise your own emotions (fear, anger and sadness)
- Learn to control your own emotions
- Learn to motivate yourself
- Develop your power to be able to put yourself in other people's positions (empathy)
- Learn to deal with other people.

Develop your talents:

- Caring
- Social and communicative
- Entrepreneurial
- Intellectual
- Creative.

Cultivate your personal qualities depending on who you are and who you want to be:

- Extrovert or introvert – most of all be yourself, care about independence and communication with others
- Friendly or unfriendly – real well-intentioned friendship is rewarding
- Careful or sloppy – apply discipline and routine to yourself
- Emotionally stable or unstable – control impulses and set aside rewards
- Intellectually autonomous or dependent – read a lot and take, where necessary, extra training courses, join professional organisations, in which you can learn much in the way of trade secrets. In short use your time for lifelong learning.

We have posited the theory that inside everyone lurks an entrepreneur. It is my outright conviction that this is true, provided we are willing to recognise and develop the the entrepreneur within ourselves. All around me I see more and more young people, adults and old people, who want exactly

that. These people want to decide for themselves how their future will look. They are prepared to work hard at developing and applying their talents. They have an eye for the opportunities, which arise, and do everything they can to seize these opportunities with both hands and exploit them. Often in close collaboration with other like-minded people.

If you awaken the entrepreneur, who lurks inside you, then you decide in increasing measure, how your life looks and what personal, social and economic wealth you are able and willing to create. Don't we all want to make a meaningful contribution, which we ourselves and others can be proud of? Listen particularly to your inner voice – for this is the best counsel that you can take, when it comes to personal enterprise. I wish you all the success in the world with this and I hope that the *Guide to Personal Enterprise and Innovation* can help you a little along the way.

The effects of personal enterprise on society can be of great value and meaning. The time is ripe for it. Imagine the possibilities if large parts of our society are given substance by enterprising people, who can see opportunities and take them. The possibilities are in our hands, the possible effects on our society are scarcely imaginable. That it shall be a vital source of empowerment, is certain. Another possibility is that we remain slaves of our own spirits and of the prison of organisations of the 20th century. The choice is yours.

Johannes Petrus Thomas Thijssen

A cat has nine lives and always lands on its feet

School and personal enterprise

First phase of life (0 – 16 years old): Johannes Petrus Thomas Thijssen (56) was born in Amstelveen, into a large middle class family. After primary school in Amstelveen, he went on to the St Nicholas Lyceum in Amsterdam and worked for various agricultural businesses during the school holidays.

Hospitality and personal enterprise

Second phase of life (16 – 25): at 16 he went (shy and uncertain) to work as buffet waiter at the restaurant belonging to the Fagel family in Amsterdam. After that he did a succession of different jobs in the hotel business in Amsterdam, Sydney, Melbourne, Perth and London and became a hotel manager for the first time in London in 1974.

Third phase of life (25 – 30): with the ambition of being able to work all over the world in hotel management, he joined the Holiday Inn group, at that time the largest hotel chain in the world, and took a management training course at the Holiday Inn University in Memphis. After that he worked on the East coast of America until his return to the Netherlands around his 30th birthday.

Fourth phase of life (30 – 40): after a digression to work for Philip Morris in Amstelveen (as manager of Management development and training), he pursued his career in the hospitality sector. At that time, his most burning desire came to fulfilment as he married Saskia. They had two sons: Thomas jnr (1980) and Alexander (1982). He combined his business and private lives with evening classes in Marketing (NIMA A, B, C) and quickly became Marketing Manager of the EurOase Recreation group, a chain of eight hotels, seven bungalow parks and seven campsites and became a member of the Association for the recreation sector. In 1984, he took the step of becoming commercial director of Postiljon Hotels (now Mercure Hotels) got responsibility for commercial and operational activities in this group (where at the time, about a thousand people were working). At this time he started giving guest lectures at the Hotel Schools in Den Haag and Maastricht.

Caring and personal enterprise

Fifth phase of life (40 – 48): In his forties he chose to become a self-employed entrepreneur. He worked in this way as leader of innovations processes for the Dutch home help organisation and for TravelCross in Spain. He built up the customer focus, company adaptability, target focus and effectiveness of care for people at home, in different teams and different organisational units. He focused sharply on the provision of service management to promote customer focus, trained service managers, and led the innovations of Kruiswerk Purchase Combination, the home-help shops, the television programme Health and Well-being on RTL4, the newspaper Healthy at Home and membership cards through ThuiszorgCard B.V.

Knowledge and personal enterprise

As host and caring entrepreneur, he did not have sufficient knowledge to implement the inclusion of the chip onto the home-help card. He found the necessary knowledge in the area of ICT and information management at the University of Amsterdam in the Information Management Masters degree course. And so in 1997, he became Executive Master in Information Management – and in the same year, took his

place on the board of the Amsterdam Society of Information Managers. He became more and more successful at combining his private, personal and business lives.

Sixth phase of life (48 – 54): in 1998 he was asked to open the Anton Dreesmann Institute for Infopreneurship at the University of Amsterdam within six weeks and after to develop the function of managing director. In this way he became involved in academic research, education and events (conferences and so forth) in the field of entrepreneurship. Together with Prof. R Maes, he developed a new learning method called *Learning by Sharing* and started a series of academic publications and presentations in the field of demand-driven education. In 2001, he came, through an assignment, into contact with the security sector in the Netherlands and wrote a publication with the title *See your Opportunity, Take your Opportunity: Technology and Innovation in the Security Sector*. In this way, he discovered the importance of and the need for innovation in the promotion of security in the community. In 2003, Jaap Tas got him involved in the war on poverty in the province of Zeeland. In the municipalities of Sluis, Reimerswaal and Vlissingen, people in poverty are being trained to get into the position to pick up their lives again as personal entrepreneurs. A people-focused organisation called *People, People, People* was developed and in the coming years, will be set up in several municipalities in Zeeland. In 2004, he became chair of the Amsterdam Society of Information Managers.

Personal enterprise now

Seventh phase of life (54 – 60): in the meantime he has been co-opted by Rijnconsult as senior advisor with special attention to the fields of educational innovation, security innovation and combating poverty. Apart from that he works for his own partnership, Hamilton International, for several clients in divergent areas of entrepreneurship and innovation. He is part of the team at the European Centre for the Experience Economy and gives guest lectures at different universities and high schools. At the end of 2004, he started the VIA NOVA ACADEMY for personal enterprise in order to be able to spread his knowledge and experience in this field more widely. www.vianova-academy.nl

With the *Guide to Personal Enterprise and Innovation* he wants to share his passion for entrepreneurship and innovation with a wide group of people in whom an entrepreneur is lurking. In this way he wants to make this new development tangible and give it structure.

The future and personal enterprise

Eighth phase of life (60 – 70): in the coming years he wants to build up his academic knowledge about learning enterprise and innovation in order to obtain a doctor's degree in economics. Through a combination of enterprise, research, teaching and writing, he wants to apply this knowledge.

Ninth phase of life (70 - ?) The nicest thing would be if he could carry on being enterprising to a very old age together with Saskia and derive full enjoyment from his life.

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